



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**40th Anniversary Celebration of SIAP
Ninth Management Seminar for the Heads of National Statistical Offices in Asia and
the Pacific
Tokyo, Japan, 31 August – 2 September 2010**

Welcoming Remarks

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Dear Colleagues,

I wish to join the Executive Secretary in welcoming you to this Management Seminar, which is a special commemorative event on the occasion of SIAP's 40th anniversary. As you know, this is my home region, and I am very proud to have been associated with SIAP's activities in the past two decades. SIAP has been a key part of my professional life, and indeed our collective life as official statisticians. I am glad that I was able to serve as the Chairman of SIAP's Governing Board, which is now the Governing Council, from 2002-2004 and contributed in some way to its development.

Over the past decades, we have witnessed a continuing trend towards the globalization of economic, social and certainly environmental activities. The global financial crisis and climate change have now emerged as new major challenges on the global agenda. At the same time, 'old' topics still remain and a key topic is of course the Millennium Development Goals. With only five years left until the 2015 deadline to achieve the MDGs, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on world leaders to attend a summit in New York on 20 September 2010 to accelerate the progress towards the MDGs. The current draft of the outcome document (as published on the Summit website), calls "for better monitoring and adequate and reliable data for all countries, which are vital for designing better programmes and policies and for ensuring accountability by development partners and stakeholders". It also urges countries to increase public expenditure for national statistical systems to effectively monitor progress towards the MDGs.

The global statistical system has to respond to this call for action. We all know that high-quality official statistics to support well-informed policy decisions are not as readily available in the developing countries. The Summit outcome document mentions

two main inputs on the road to better data: national statistical capacity building and the importance of partnership. Statistical capacity building has now been recognized for many years as crucial. What is new is the understanding that only in working with all partners, national, regional and global, that the best outcome can be achieved. In this seminar, I am sure new modalities of improving statistical capacity will be discussed.

This is exactly where institutions like SIAP play such an important role. They have dedicated themselves in enhancing statistical capacity and gone about doing their work steadily and professionally. For 40 years now, SIAP has been involved in this role that is so crucial in enhancing the production and availability of much needed data. Not only that, SIAP and its staff have pioneered the use of a system of country-based and Tokyo based workshops, which is cost-efficient and country-oriented. But SIAP is far more than an efficient provider of technical support to countries. SIAP also represents the sense of partnership that is increasingly important in today's global world. It is a strong partner on all levels: for the countries in the region, for other regional institutions and within the global statistical system.

National statistical systems and the international and regional agencies, such as SIAP, form the core of the global statistical system. The strong sense of community that we share is based on our shared professional ethics and common methodologies. This professional vision has been enshrined in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which are still as important as they were when they were adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 1994. They form the basis on which all of us in this room operate, especially in the management of national statistical systems. Operating a well-functioning statistical system is a very demanding but very rewarding experience.

Indeed, we are usually so busy in collecting and disseminating data, in doing all our methodological work and in coordinating with partners, that we rarely take the time to step back and reflect on our success. This year, however, the global statistical community has decided to do exactly this: to take the time on a special day to reflect upon our achievements. As you all know on 20.10.2010 we will all celebrate the first

World Statistics Day. It seems only fitting that SIAP would have its own celebration of its own important role in the global statistical community in the same year in which we celebrate the World Statistics Day. I wish to congratulate SIAP and everybody who contributed in building SIAP the role model that it is today.

I wish to finish my welcoming remarks with some words from Secretary-General, who addressed world leaders in a letter last month. The Secretary-General wrote: "Let us make this historic World Statistics Day a success by acknowledging and celebrating the role of statistics in the social and economic development of our societies and by dedicating further efforts and resources to strengthening national statistical capacity". The words of the Secretary-General could not be better suited for the anniversary that we are celebrating today. I wish you a successful meeting on a very important topic.